

# Hats off to...

## AW1(AW) Michael Carlson HSL-46 Detachment 10



Story by LCdr. Ben Walker  
HSL-46

While returning from an evening ashore in Panama City, Panama, a Sailor aboard USS *Robert G. Bradley* (FFG 49) began horsing around with shipmates on the pier. He didn't notice a chain stretched across part of the pier at mid-thigh height. Running at full speed, he hit the chain, tumbled over it, hit his head on the cement pier edge, and plunged into 15 feet of murky water. There was no ladder for him to climb back onto the pier.

His shipmates on the pier pointed toward the direction of shore and shouted for the Sailor to swim for it. However, they soon realized he was injured. He was disoriented and unable to make his way to safety. The distance between him and both the pier and shore steadily increased as the current pulled him toward the harbor.

As shipmates noticed the Sailor beginning to weaken, they called for a SAR swimmer. They were

afraid the Sailor wouldn't be able to make it to shore on his own.

At this time, AW1(AW) Michael Carlson, a member of the air detachment, came on the pier, saw the group, heard them yelling, and realized what was happening. He identified himself as a qualified SAR swimmer, raced to the ship to get a life ring, and within moments, was in the water, swimming toward the injured Sailor.

He placed the exhausted Sailor in a rescue carry and swam 50 yards to shore. Crewmembers took the now-incapacitated Sailor aboard ship. Corpsmen stitched up two cuts he received in the fall, then sent him ashore for further treatment. They gave AW1 Carlson antibiotic booster shots because of the water pollution. ■

Cdr. Mark Baulch, commanding officer of Robert G. Bradley, awarded AW1(AW) Carlson the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for what he felt was a life-saving rescue.